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US 51 Needs Assessment

Wisconsin Department of Transportation District 1

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FWHA), is moving forward with the in-depth study to review and analyze transportation needs along US 51 from Burma Road in the village of McFarland to Spring Road east of the city of Stoughton.

This study will document existing and future problems with the road as it exists today. The US 51 Needs Assessment will be completed in early 2004. The study team has been gathering and analyzing data on existing traffic counts, crash history, environmental resources, existing land use and projected future growth. The study team has also begun studying operational problems on US 51 along the study corridor and east from Stoughton to I-39/90.

Transportation needs survey

This newsletter includes a transportation needs survey, which gives you an opportunity to provide us with your experiences and your opinions regarding US 51 between McFarland and I-39/90. The survey includes 10 questions regarding traffic congestion, pedestrian and bike facilities, safety concerns, and other corridor issues. The success and accuracy of the survey depends on you. Please fill out the survey and return it to Strand Associates by **August 8th.**

Traffic modeling update

Each type of land use has a specific impact on the transportation system of a community. For example, a grocery store generates many more vehicle trips per day than a single-family home. The study team has already gathered existing traffic volumes on US 51. In order to examine projected future traffic volumes, the team needs a good idea as to where development will occur.

To understand how the communities have grown, the study team analyzed past population and development trends. Based on those trends, the team prepared projections for future population growth and development. After reviewing the land-use plans for the communities and identifying logical areas for the extension of public sewer and water facilities, the study team allocated this future growth where development is likely to occur within each community. The team then calculated the projected vehicle trips for each land use type.

Over the summer, these vehicle trips will be studied in two different ways. First, the study team will examine the impacts of increased traffic volumes on major roads in the study area. Then the team will examine how each road operates. For example, the study team will be looking at how the timing of stoplights on US 51 affects travel times.

Crash and traffic data studied

In reviewing existing conditions, the study team looked at current traffic volumes and analyzed the crash history along the US 51 corridor between 1996 and 2002.

Current traffic volumes

The 2003 average annual daily traffic volumes (AADT) vary depending on the location along the corridor as shown below. The approximate US 51 traffic volumes are shown in vehicles per day (vpd):

- At Burma Road in the Village of McFarland—18,000 vpd
- Between the south limits of McFarland and WIS 138 West—17,000 vpd
- Within downtown Stoughton—15,000 vpd
- East of Stoughton city limits—4,400 vpd

WisDOT estimates that trucks make up about three percent of the total number of vehicles traveling through Stoughton.

Crash history

Crash rates along the corridor were highest in Stoughton. In fact, the seven-year average crash rate in the segment between WIS 138 (west) and County N is twice the statewide average. Between County B (east) and WIS 138 (west), the crash rate was about the same as the statewide average. The remaining northern and eastern segments of the study corridor had crash rates below the statewide average.

Seven crashes resulted in seven fatalities on US 51 during the analysis period, with one of the seven a pedestrian. Four of the fatalities occurred in the segment between McFarland and County B (east). The remaining three fatalities occurred in the segment between WIS 138 (west) and County N. The majority of the fatalities occurred at or near intersections. Intersections with the highest number of crashes included Page Street, County B (west)/County AB, County N/Veterans Street, and Division Street. The County B/ County AB and County N intersections had crash rates that meet WisDOT criteria for further study.

Participation opportunities

Summary of focus groups

In April and May, the study team held four focus groups with interested stakeholders in the study area. The team met with representatives from local governments, local businesses, area farmers, and local and county environmental and service organizations. Some of the key points that were discussed at the focus groups included:

- Problem intersections
- Increased traffic on US 51
- Access to adjacent properties and businesses
- Posted versus actual speeds on the road
- Impatient drivers
- The need to educate drivers about following and passing farm equipment
- Pedestrian and bike concerns
- Possible short-term improvements, such as signage and turning lanes
- Existing and potential effects on the character of the communities and the study area's lakes

The findings of the focus groups have helped direct the study team on what issues need to be analyzed and addressed as this study moves forward.

Stoughton Fair and McFarland Family Fest

The study team will be available to answer any questions at two local events this summer. Members of the team hosted a booth at the Stoughton Fair (July 4th weekend) and will be hosting a booth at Family Fest in McFarland (September 12th – 14th). Please come out to see us at Family Fest.

Needs assessment workshops

The study team will host three needs assessment workshops in early fall 2003. To update the public on the needs assessment process, workshops will

be held in McFarland, Stoughton, and in one of the rural towns. These workshops will give the public the opportunity to provide input on the vision for the future of US 51 based on the transportation needs and findings identified during the study.

Other WisDOT studies

WisDOT is currently conducting several other studies near the Stoughton to McFarland corridor:

Stoughton Road Needs Assessment

The Stoughton Road Needs Assessment is examining existing and future conditions for Stoughton Road from the village of McFarland north through the city of Madison to I-39/90/94. For more information, contact Barb Feeney at (608) 246-3869.

West Beltline/Verona Road Corridor Study

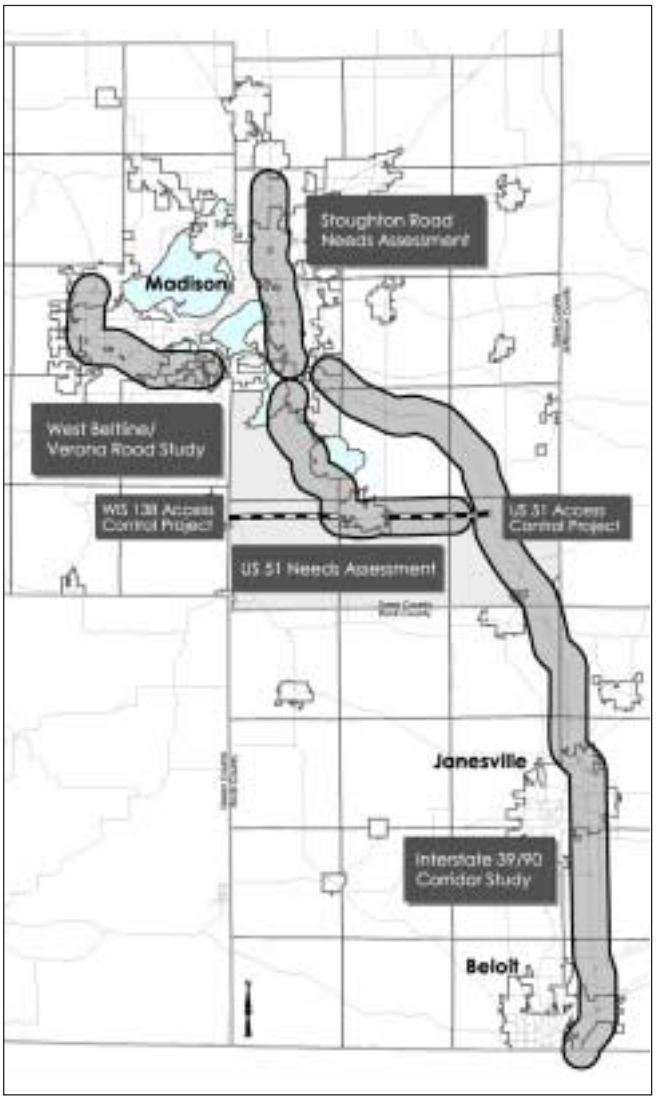
WisDOT is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement that plans for long-term infrastructure improvements to the existing Beltline between Todd Drive and University Avenue, as well as Verona Road between the Beltline and County PD. For more information, contact John Steiner at (608) 246-3862.

Interstate 39/90 Corridor Study

This study examines the need to convert the I-39/90 Corridor between Madison and the Illinois State Line from a four-lane route to a six-lane route. For more information, contact John Steiner at (608) 246-3862.

Access control projects: WIS 138 and US 51

WisDOT is working on access control projects along six miles of WIS 138, from US 14 to the west limits of Stoughton; and along six miles of US 51, from the east Stoughton limits to I-39/90. These projects involve identifying existing driveways and issuing authorizations to their property owners. For more information, contact Jim Merriman at (608) 246-3848.



Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns about this project, you may contact the following representatives:

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